

THE PREPARATION OF CHRIST

FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

By Brian Bailey

In looking at the life of Christ through the book of Isaiah, we can learn many important truths about how our Lord Jesus Christ became prepared to fulfill His ministry. We know that the life of Christ is a pattern for each of us to follow. And by the grace and anointing of God, there is nothing that happened to the Lord during His earthly ministry that is not also attainable for our lives. First we need to learn to follow the way of the Lord for our own life, but we must also have an understanding of these truths for those that we minister to. God is preparing to pour out His Spirit upon the nations; and the Lord is raising up teachers who will be ready to train the multitudes who are already beginning to come to Christ.

BEFORE HIS BIRTH

Beginning with Christ's conception in Isaiah 7:17, Isaiah prophesied about the life of Christ with great accuracy. Then, in Isaiah 49:1, the prophet went on to tell us the words of Christ. "*Listen, o islands, to Me; and take heed, you peoples from afar. The Lord has called Me from the womb.*" These words are clearly written to the Church of the Last Days, those living in the island nations and in continents far away from Israel.

We find in this verse that the call of God upon Jesus Christ was revealed when Jesus was still in His mother's womb. This is fulfilled in Matthew 1:21 where the angel said to Joseph, "*For He shall save His people from their sins.*" This call from the womb also happened to Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul. (Read in Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 1:15).

Although these men were called of God from before they were born, they did not understand that call until many years later. This can still happen today. God can place a call upon your life before you were born, but you may not understand the message until adulthood or later in life. For this reason, the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers (Eph.1:16-18). He prayed that God would give them the spirit of revelation so that they would know the hope of His calling. In Acts 19:6, we read that the Ephesian believers were Pentecostals who spoke in tongues and prophesied. But Paul knew that they needed more. They needed to understand their calling!

It is very important that we understand and are dedicated to the call of God for our life. I have known ministers who have looked at the ministry of someone else and have wrongly coveted it. You must be careful. If the Lord is anointing and blessing some brother or sister in a certain ministry, it does not mean that God is calling you to the same ministry. We have seen many ministers destroyed when they tried to move in a different ministry from that which God had given them. You must realize that there is a personal call on your life; you must dedicate yourself to God's will and not look to the right or the left.

When you are pastoring a church, you must also be able to choose the other leaders for the church by the anointing of God. Years ago we knew a man who had been traveling through Holland and Germany. This man had done many miracles. He came to us and asked to join our work, but we knew that his life was not upright. As we were speaking to him, the Lord opened my spiritual eyes. Behind him I saw the demon prince that was causing his miracles. This demon was saying "I want to join your ministry." The Spirit of God then spoke through me and said "*No man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*" (Hebrews 5:4). We cannot take a ministry position unless it is given to us by God!

You must know who people are spiritually, because there are false pretenders. The one who praises you so highly when you become the new pastor, may be the one who tries to crucify you later on. The person who tells you that you are a gift from heaven may be the one who would like to see you slip into hell. However, be assured that God will honor your ministry when He puts you into leadership. He will show you who the people are spiritually. Perhaps He will visit you in the night and show you who the people are, or sometimes He will give you a single word or a name to describe that person. The word of knowledge and the word of wisdom can show you. Ask God to show you your Joshuas and your Timothys that you can train and lead on.

In Isaiah 49:1, Christ went on to declare that from the womb He was called by name. This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:21 where the angel told Mary, "*You shall call His name Jesus.*" Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua that means "Jehovah is salvation." This revealed that He was to be the Savior. Names often have a prophetic significance. It is important when you start a church or an organization that you pray to receive God's name for that work, because in that name will be a revelation of the ministry that God has ordained for you.

HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD

In Isaiah 9:6, we read about the birth of Christ when the prophet declared, "*For to us a child is born.*" We understand that Christ did not just suddenly appear in the world as the mighty Son of God. He came as a baby. The Lord Jesus Christ is our model of a leader. One important truth about leadership is that everything a leader does must be attainable by those who follow him. As a leader of men, Christ came in the same way as men and had to grow in the same way. As pastors and leaders, you must be careful to lead the sheep in a way that they can follow your example. Your goal is not to impress people, but to lead the sheep.

As a child, Christ had to grow to maturity before He could begin His ministry. The first stage of His spiritual development was that He had to prepare to be an able minister of the Word. Thus, we read in Isaiah 7:15, "*Butter and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.*" The butter (or curds) speaks of the abundance of milk, which 1 Peter 2:2 tells us spiritually is the sincere milk of the Word of God. Honey speaks of revelation, and is also a type of the Spirit (1 Sam.14:27). Because Jesus fed on butter (the Word of God) and honey (the revelation of the Spirit), He was able to refuse the evil and choose the good. As we also feed ourselves in the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to speak to us, we then gain spiritual discernment and have the ability to make right choices.

We can see a picture of the Lord's further development in Isaiah 49:2. Here the Lord declares,

"*And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.*" We find in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God is like a sharp two-edged sword. While Christ grew as a child, He learned to fill His mouth with the Word of God. Then, at the age of twelve, He was in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions (Luke 2:46-47). All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. The Lord wants to also do this in each of our lives. We have already said that Jesus Christ is our model leader, and that a leader must do that which his followers can also attain to. The Lord wants to accomplish the promise of Isaiah 59:21 in our lives, where the Lord says, "*My Spirit that is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth.*"

Once, we were on the faculty of a Bible college where some teachers were teaching conflicting doctrines. One of the teachers on the opposing side said, "It's alright, Brian. It is good for the students to hear my side and your side." But later that day in a prayer meeting, the Lord met me in an awesome way and declared, "It's My Word! It's MY Word, not man's word!" Therefore, when we preach and counsel, we need to cry out to God. Don't just throw out a lot of opinions and scriptures. We need to receive the Word of the Lord, so that when we speak we are the messengers of God. When Christ was only twelve years old, He was already able to confound the doctors of the law in Jerusalem with the words that His heavenly Father had placed in His mouth. By that time, the Lord Jesus had already fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 49:2, that His mouth would be like a sharp sword.

As Jesus was already skilled with the Word of God at the age of twelve, we might ask the question, "Why didn't the Father send Jesus out to preach to the nation at that time?" This is also a question that many young Bible school graduates may ask of the Lord. After they have learned and achieved in their Bible classes, they may feel that they should be sent forth to preach, pastor a church, or become a missionary. I can remember when I graduated from Bible school. I thought the Lord would lead me directly into the ministry. Instead, He told me to go back home. It was months later before He opened a door into the ministry for me. Young Bible school graduates may be sent forth immediately to test their abilities and "spy out" the land of their inheritance, but to enter the fullness of their ministry, there are more stages of preparation that are needed. We can see this truth demonstrated in the life of Christ.

We are also told in Isaiah 53:2 that Christ was "*a root out of dry ground.*" It is clear that Jesus did not grow up in a spiritual atmosphere. We often think, "If I can be where the Spirit is moving I will be alright." Yet, at times, God puts us where there is dryness. This is important, because dry ground can develop something that a spiritually well-watered place of revival cannot. Dry ground can develop strong roots. There are some trees in rainy climates that grow up very quickly. However, because they do not grow strong roots, you can push them over easily. I am concerned when I see someone shoot up very rapidly in the ministry because there is a danger that they can also quickly come crashing down. It is important that we develop strong spiritual roots so that we can grow up and be fruitful, even if the Lord leads us to minister in a dry or difficult location. Isaiah 9:1-2 tells us more about the location where Jesus grew up, and where He also spent most of His time in the ministry. It describes Galilee as "*the land of the shadow of death,*" where "*the people... walked in darkness.*" This was the location where the Father placed His Son, yet because of His preparation, our Lord was made ready to overcome all the difficulties He would face.

FROM THE AGE OF TWELVE TO THIRTY

In Isaiah 49:2, we can continue to see the development and progression in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. After we hear the testimony, *"He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,"* we then read, *"In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me."* The first part of that verse had been fulfilled by the time the Lord was twelve years old. Then we see nothing at all in the Gospels about Christ's life for the next eighteen years. However, we can see these years of His preparation in the next part of Isaiah's prophecy. Christ was hidden under the shadow of His Father's hand. We have already seen in Isaiah 9:2 that He lived in a land of darkness, but here we see that He was also personally hidden in that darkness.

Often, our theology causes us to believe that if we are walking in obedience to God, we will constantly be in light. No! It may be that if we have walked in obedience, we will be placed in darkness. Isaiah 50:10 says *"Who among you fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, who walks in darkness and has no light?"* The verse goes on to tell us that when we are in darkness, we are to *"trust in the name of the Lord."* In verse 11, we are warned about trying to make our own way out when God puts us in darkness. *"Behold all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled- This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment."* If you are in darkness and you are walking uprightly with God, then trust in the Lord and wait. Isaiah 45:2 tells us there are *"treasures of darkness,"* that we often will not find anywhere else. The Lord can also speak to us when we are in darkness, as when He said in Matthew 10:27, *"What I tell you in darkness, that speak in the light."*

There was a time many years ago when we had no money. My wife Audrey was sick, our apartment had no heat, and we did not have any food. We did have a telephone, and I knew that I could have called a number of people who would have been glad to send us relief. However, the Lord spoke to me and said, "If you pick up that phone, I am through with you." I knew that the Lord did not mean I would have lost my salvation. I would have probably remained a pastor and continued at the same spiritual level I had attained. But I knew that the Lord was saying I could disqualify myself from having Him lead me onward and upward in the Spirit. It was only after I proved I could remain obedient and trusting in that darkness that the Lord rescued us from that trial.

There was a purpose for Christ to be hidden in darkness between the age of twelve and thirty, during which time the gospels give us no light about His preparation. Isaiah 49:2 tells us what happened. *"In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft."* During these years when our Lord was hidden from recorded history, He was being shaped and polished to become an arrow that would be able to hit the mark.

To understand this better, let us consider the Hebrew word *chatha*, which is the word most commonly translated as "sin" in the Old Testament. It can also be translated as "to miss the mark." We can see this concept in Romans 3:23 where the Scripture says, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* This scripture helps us understand why Christ was prepared to be a polished shaft. He had to be the arrow that would fly straight to hit the mark. He had to be different than the rest of sinful humanity, who like crooked arrows miss the mark and fall short of the glory of God.

A number of years ago I had the experience of dying. I was lying in my bed when an angel of the Lord came and touched me. I came out of my body, and looked down at it before we moved upwards. The angel took me toward heaven where the whole of my life was quickly shown to me in a series of pictures. As I saw my life stretched out before me in pictures, there were blank pictures that the angel caused me to know were events in my life which had been forgiven and blotted out. But there was something else I learned as I drew near the river that separates the living from the dead before you enter the heavenly city.

As I was going to the river to enter heaven, I was so sad. I knew my sins were forgiven, I was baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. I was also a pastor and had been walking in the light of God that I had received up to that time. Yet, I was so sad about going to heaven at that time. It was revealed to me that there is something else required of every person who longs to enter God's presence in heaven. We must fulfill the course that God has prepared for our life from before the foundation of the world. In agony of heart I cried out to the angel, "Do not let me go to heaven! Let me return to complete the plan that God has prepared for me."

After this experience happened, I asked God, "Why?" The Lord said to me, "That you might warn My people and show them what it is like to die." Beloved, one never wants to go to heaven before one has hit the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I know the agony of it, and I would spare anybody that experience. Revelation 21:4 speaks of how God will have to wipe away the tears in heaven. When you enter heaven, you will have God's plan for your life shown to you. You will be shown how much of that plan you have completed. We will give an account of not only if we are saved and have gathered some heavenly rewards. We must also give an account as to whether we have been as an arrow that hits the mark and does not fall short of the glory of God planned for our life. Therefore as Ecclesiastes 7:17 declares, it is important that we do not die before the appointed time.

Let us consider how an arrow is prepared. There are basically two parts to an arrow: the sharp arrowhead, made perhaps of metal like a sword, and the polished shaft made of wood. These two parts represent the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sharp arrowhead speaks of Christ, the Son of God, who could not sin or fail. We have already seen how Jesus (the Incarnate Word) was seen as a sharp sword, like the arrowhead, by the age of twelve. The wooden shaft of the arrow represents the human nature of Christ, the Son of Man. As God He could not fail, but as man, He could.

During these years that the Lord was hidden from recorded history, His human nature was being prepared so that He would be as a straight, smooth shaft. If the shaft is crooked or rough when the arrow flies through the air, then even if the arrow is pointed very accurately, it will miss the mark. Hebrews 5:8 reveals to us how our Lord was shaped and polished to become an arrow that would be able to hit the mark. "*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.*" His human nature had to be prepared by the things He suffered. In that way, He could be sent forth to hit the mark assigned to Him by the Father. That mark He hit was the cross. As Hebrews 5:9 goes on to say of Christ, the obedient One, "*And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation.*" Through His obedient sufferings, Christ was prepared to become the Arrow of God that would accomplish our salvation. It is as we also learn to obediently go through the testings and trials of God that He is able to polish and perfect the shaft of our life. He wants us

to be mature arrows in His hand that will hit the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and will fulfill our ministry.

There are all kinds of ways that God can use to polish us. Some time ago, a pastor came to me and said, "I want to leave my church because all the members are rebellious. Can I close down the church and send the members to a different church?" When I prayed the Lord told me, "Don't close the church." The Lord showed me that they were like the Moabites in Psalm 60:8, who were being used by God as His *washpot*. The Lord told me, "When I want to perfect and polish a pastor, I can bring him to that church. The rebellious members rub and wash and polish him until he is polished, and then I will send him on and bring in another pastor who needs polishing." I saw that these church members were never going to go on in God, but that the Lord could use them to help prepare others who desired to press on toward the mark.

The next step in the preparation of Christ is found in Isaiah 49:2. "*In His quiver He has hidden Me.*" After an arrow is prepared for use, it must wait until the proper time when the archer will choose to use it. From this scripture it appears that Jesus was prepared and ready for some time before the Father sent Him forth into public ministry. There are times when God will hide us, where in loneliness we will wait for the Father to choose us and send us forth. This teaches us to depend on God. We can do nothing, except what the Lord shows us to do. This preparation can also help us so that we will be ready if we need to stand alone, or make an unpopular decision in the ministry.

ANOINTED AT THE JORDAN RIVER

When the Lord went to the Jordan River to begin His ministry, He was the prepared arrow that was put into the bow of His Father. But we also know that for an arrow to be shot out to hit the mark, it has to be released with power. It was at the Jordan that the Father anointed Christ with the power He would need to speed toward the mark and fulfill His ministry.

We read in the Gospels of how the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon Him. When the Spirit came upon Jesus, the mantle of God was placed upon Him and He became the "Christ," which means "The Anointed One."

The prophet Isaiah reveals to us the mantle of anointing that was upon our Lord Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 11:1 we read, "*There shall come a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*" This refers to our Lord, who was descended from David, whose father was Jesse. The Lord is also often referred to in the Scriptures as the Branch.

We then read in the next verse, "*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*" These anointings are called the seven Spirits of God in Revelation 4:5 and 5:6. This mantle of the seven Spirits of God that came upon Christ at the Jordan River is different from, and greater than the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Christ's anointing was far greater than what the disciples received on the day of Pentecost. We have to be able to understand the difference between these two experiences.

For example, one of the seven Spirits of God is the spirit of knowledge, while one of the nine gifts of the Spirit that we can receive after we are baptized in the Holy Spirit is the word of knowledge. There is a difference between the spirit of knowledge and the word of knowledge. Solomon is an example of someone who was given the spirit of knowledge. A person like the Queen of Sheba could come to Solomon and ask him any number of questions, and because of the anointing that *rested* upon him, he could answer every question. Because of the mantle placed upon his life, Solomon's knowledge was a continual flow. But the word of knowledge is not so. When the gift of the word of knowledge operates, you will supernaturally know a certain fact. Then the gift might not operate for a length of time before it will give you the knowledge of another fact. Sometimes, you will get a revelation through the gift of knowledge, and sometimes you will not. But the spirit of knowledge is a *continuous abiding anointing* of the knowledge of God. This was the anointing upon Christ. Jesus knew by the spirit of knowledge who each person was personally. John 2:24 tells us, "*He knew all men.*" Christ even knew who Judas was, although He kept that knowledge to Himself.

So while we should each seek to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and we should covet the gifts of the Spirit, there is more of the Holy Spirit that we can receive. This is why the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers (who were already Pentecostals and were baptized in the Holy Spirit) that they would receive the spirit of wisdom (Ephesians 1:17). We need the anointing of the seven Spirits of God that was upon Christ to help bring the Church to full maturity in these Last Days. We read in Revelation 5:6 that the Lamb of God had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. We also want to have the nature of the Lamb of God, so that the seven Spirits of God can flow through us and be sent out to minister to others.

The first of these seven Spirits that Christ was anointed with was the Spirit of the Lord. We read more about this anointing in Isaiah 61:1. "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach.*" The Spirit of the Lord is to anoint us, and enable us to preach. We want to be able to say with Christ, "*The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority*" (John 14:10). It is very important for a minister to be anointed by God to preach, because it is the Holy Spirit who confirms the preaching of the word.

The second anointing in Isaiah 11:2 is the spirit of wisdom. It is the anointing which gives us the ability to make right choices at the right time. Wisdom could be defined as correctly using knowledge. Knowledge by itself is not enough. You can know something without being able to properly use that knowledge. To be a good leader we need the spirit of wisdom, just as Joshua received the spirit of wisdom from Moses when he was anointed to become the next leader (Deuteronomy 34:9).

Once I was the pastor of a church that was entering into the Charismatic movement. When the Lord began to move in one church service, the wife of one of the deacons spoke out and opposed the work of the Spirit. I closed the service, and went next door to our residence as I considered what to do about this difficulty. As I walked into our dining room, I had a remarkable experience. I saw the seven-branched golden candlestick passing across the wall. Revelation 4:5 tells us that the seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God, and as I saw the candlestick a mighty mantle of the Spirit came upon me. There was an awesome manifestation of the holiness of God that I cannot explain. But this mighty mantle came upon me, which I felt was the spirit of wisdom. Oh, what wisdom the

Spirit gave me to answer this church problem. All I did was laugh, as when the Lord laughed at those in Psalm 2 who were opposing Him. I laughed because that woman who had opposed the move of the Spirit had tried to stand against the awesome might of a holy God. When she was in the service she had been perfectly healthy, but within a half hour of that experience, she was in the hospital. God is not mocked!

The next anointing is the spirit of understanding. This can help us to understand God's ways, and what He is doing (see 1 Chronicles 12:32 and Luke 24:45). The spirit of understanding also helps us to properly interpret visions and dreams (Daniel 1:17). It is very important when a person has a vision or a dream that you understand the revelation correctly. A wrong interpretation can cause a lot of trouble.

The fourth anointing is the spirit of counsel. Counsel can be defined as advice or guidance given by a knowledgeable or experienced person. In Isaiah 9:6 we read that one of the names of our Lord is that He is the Counselor. To be an effective counselor, we need to have the spirit of counsel. You should not counsel another person without the anointing of God, because you are setting a person into a path that may determine their eternal destiny.

At a Bible school where my wife and I were teachers, I was told that one of our students had fallen into sin during the school vacation. As I went to his room I was considering how I would rebuke him. But as I entered the room, the Spirit of God fell upon me. I found myself not declaring what had been in my natural thinking, but instead I began to prophecy that God was still going to use him mightily. Today he is pastoring a church of over 4,000 people. It was God's counsel that was given in that situation. The Lord knew that the young man did not need a rebuke, but encouragement. It is important that we counsel people under the anointing of the Spirit, so that we say the words that God wants to say.

The fifth of these anointings is the spirit of might. This was the mantle that Samson had when he did his mighty works. The Lord Jesus Christ also had this anointing upon Him when He drove out the merchants, overturned the moneychangers' tables, and cleansed the temple.

The next anointing is the spirit of knowledge. This anointing supernaturally reveals to us facts from the past, present, or future. The spirit of knowledge can give a very strong impression or witness to your heart or mind, so that you know something that has happened or that will happen. Christ was able to know the character of Nathaniel, and also see him under the fig tree by the spirit of knowledge (John 1:47-48).

The seventh anointing, the spirit of the fear of the Lord, is to bring conviction, repentance, and revival. This anointing can do much more than just bring a single person under conviction. This mantle can come upon a church, a town, or even an entire nation. This is what happens when a great revival comes. The people are convicted of their sins, even if they do not know about Christ, and even if they have never been in a church. This is the kind of revival that we are going to see again in our day. There have been many visions given of the revival that is going to take place, where community after community, city after city, will be blanketed by the spirit of the fear of the Lord. The people will be falling down in the streets, crying out to God and asking Him for forgiveness. We are going to see nations subdued by the Spirit in these Last Days.

Because our Lord Jesus Christ was anointed with the seven Spirits of God, He was able to accomplish the will of God and manifest the power of God. With this same anointing, the end time Church will show to the world the power of God again.

"UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN"

We have already read in Isaiah 9:6 where Isaiah prophesied, "*Unto us a child is born.*" Jesus was born as a baby, just as we all are born again into the kingdom of God as a babe in Christ. Then He grew to maturity, just as we have to "grow in grace." But Isaiah went on to say "*Unto us a son is given.*" This was fulfilled when Jesus was about 30 years old, when it was His time to be shown to Israel as the mature Son of God. There at the Jordan river, the Father spoke from heaven and said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" It was at this time that Christ was given by the Father, not as a baby, but as the mature Son of God. His character had been formed. He was ready as the Arrow of God. It was then, in the fullness of time, that Jesus Christ was presented to Israel by John the Baptist as he said "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" There at the Jordan River, He was placed in the bow, and the Father shot Him with power towards the mark ordained for His life. This mark was the cross of Calvary.

Likewise, we must also pass through the preparations that Jesus went through, so that we can become as arrows in the Father's hand. Our mouth must be made like a sharp sword or arrowhead as we become skilled in the Word of God. We must submit to the chastenings of God, learning obedience in the school of suffering until we become polished shafts. We are to be men and women that have become prepared arrows in the quiver of the Lord, to be pulled out and shot by the power of the Holy Spirit. For then shall we speed straight towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Beloved, let us each become an arrow that hits the mark and fulfills the ministry that God has ordained for our life.

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